

80 Ideas for How Churches Can Help

The following is a list of opportunities for churches, and some community groups, to take an active part in the Alabama CPR Network. The list was compiled from several sources: 1) recommendations from faith-based groups who are currently supporting a prison ministry, 2) activities of other prison reentry initiatives, and 3) current church activities. This is not intended to be a complete list of opportunities to serve. You are invited to add, modify and update this list to meet your needs. The aim of the Alabama CPR Network is to present opportunities that meet the needs of churches and groups of every size and capability.

Education & Training

1. Provide personal one-on-one financial counseling for inmates or previously incarcerated citizens who are in need of such assistance
2. Train members of your church to become mentors for inmates or previously incarcerated citizens
3. Volunteer to develop or purchase visual aids, motivators, games and handouts for other churches who have an existing Prison Ministry
4. Collect self-development books and donate to correctional and transitional facilities. (Please follow individual facility guidelines)
5. Conduct workshops for organizations on how to establish and maintain an effective prison/reentry ministry
6. Organize a regional church workshop to share information about prison ministry and reentry activities
7. Invite CPR Network partners and state officials to speak at your church on topics related to prison ministry and reentry efforts
8. Invite successful previously incarcerated citizens to speak at your church to share their success stories and the critical role the church played in their success
9. Provide self-development materials for inmate families
10. Actively seek, recruit and advertise expert speakers in the area of prisoner reentry and public safety
11. Develop or purchase tracts on recovery, reentry and inmate family support—distribute this material to your congregation and community
12. Provide workshop and training materials and supplies to correctional facility chaplains or transitional facilities in your area. (Please contact individual chaplains for facilities to determine the needs of their specific facility.)
13. Conduct training sessions for church members willing to participate in Prison Ministries and Reentry at your church or partner churches
14. Organize events at your church to allow previously incarcerated citizens to share their experiences and successes with your Teens Ministry
15. Provide parenting classes and materials for incarcerated parents and their partners (Please contact correctional or transitional facility directly to determine their requirements.)

Emergency Funding

16. Provide an emergency relief program to assist previously incarcerated citizens when a legitimate financial crisis arises during the first 90 days post-release
17. Provide funding for economically disadvantaged churches to develop websites to allow them to share their work in prison reentry ministry and community work
18. Provide \$100 gift certificates for disadvantages inmate families during the holiday season
19. Pay the monthly parole fee—approximately \$30 per month—for one parolee for a year

Employment

20. Identify job opportunities within your congregation or other partners for newly released individuals
21. Provide assistance to newly released individuals in completing job applications and seeking employment
22. Conduct a job fair specifically designed for new released disadvantaged citizens or others who have difficulty finding employment
23. Post job vacancy listings prominently in your church and share it with correctional facility chaplains and transitional facilities in your area (Please contact chaplains to determine their specific requirements and needs)
24. Provide wage subsidies to businesses willing to employ previously incarcerated citizens
25. Assist local employers to secure a fidelity bond for at-risk employees. These bonds are at no cost to the employer and can be acquired through the Department of Labor. See <http://www.bonds4jobs.com/index.html>
26. Assist local employers to secure a Work Opportunity Tax Credit through the IRS. This incentive reduces income tax liability for businesses who hire former prisoners who are members of low-income families. See www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax
27. Identify community service opportunities and internships for people newly released from prison who cannot find work so that they can acquire real work experience and on-the-job training

Food/Clothing/Personal

28. Maintain a food pantry to assist previously incarcerated individuals and their families
29. Make regular contributions to an existing food pantry to assist previously incarcerated individuals and their families
30. Provide a \$25 Dollar Store gift certificate to one inmate per month upon their release from a correctional facility to the community or to a transitional facility in your area

31. Provide a personal hygiene packet (deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, shampoo, lotion) to one inmate upon their release from a correctional facility to the community or to a transitional facility in your area
32. Establish a Clothes Closet for newly released individuals
33. Pay for a haircut or hairstyling at a local salon for a newly released individual
34. Provide phone cards to inmates who have been approved for parole but are awaiting release (Please contact individual correctional or transitional facility to determine facility requirements and policies.)

Healthcare Services

35. Partner with others to conduct Health Fairs with basic health screenings; ensure invitations are offered to previously incarcerated citizens and their families
36. Establish a voucher system to allow previously incarcerated citizens free or reduced cost medical care

Housing

37. Establish a Transitional home for previously incarcerated citizens or others who are under supervision of Pardons and Parole (Please consult guidelines provided by Department of Mental Health Services and other regulatory agencies)
38. Establish a fund to be used for rent subsidies, utility activation fees and similar needs for newly released individuals

Professional Services

39. Provide mentoring services to previously incarcerated citizens
40. Provide educational tutoring services to previously incarcerated citizens
41. Provide a Life Skills Workshop targeted to previously incarcerated citizens and other members of your congregation with similar needs
42. Provide technical support to economically disadvantaged churches to help them gain access to more information about prisoner reentry and community initiatives
43. Sponsor one newly released individual for one year. As a sponsor you would be responsible for connecting the individual with needed community services, providing a nurturing church home, mentoring and other services such as rent and transportation assistance as necessary
44. Establish an Inmate Family Support Service at your church—or in collaboration with other churches—which would be responsible for providing a list of services to inmate families
45. Partnering with other churches to provide an Inmate Family Support Service in your area
46. Provide free copy services to existing Prison and Reentry Ministry programs
47. Establish a local resource directory and make it available to your entire congregation. This can be used to provide services to inmate families, newly released individuals and other needy members of the community

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48. Establish or expand a Prison and Reentry Ministry at your church

49. Provide free or discounted childcare services of one reentry family for six months
50. Provide free copy services to correctional facility chaplains or transitional facilities in your area
51. Organize volunteers to assist correctional facility chaplains or transitional facility in your area. (Please contact individual chaplains to determine the needs of their specific facility.)
52. Develop and distribute press releases outlining significant events or accomplishments in your Prison and Reentry Ministry activities
53. Organize a Calling Team to make regularly scheduled calls to newly released individuals and their families (with their permission) to share information and determine needs.
54. Provide facilitated, supervised parent-child visits in correctional and transitional facilities (Please contact each facility directly to determine their requirements of the specific facility)
55. Solicit free or discount legal help on behalf of inmates or newly released individuals
56. Solicit free or discount professional services from members of your congregation for newly released individuals
57. Actively seeking and developing relationships with legislators who oversee correctional and community correctional budgets

Transportation

58. Provide a \$50 gasoline card to one recently released individual or their family
59. Provide or coordinate transportation for newly released individuals when there is a need
60. Plan and organize volunteers to provide transportation to critical appointments for newly released inmates
61. Provide transportation to church services
62. Develop a transportation pool among area churches to provide transportation services to newly released individuals
63. Provide van/bus drivers (special license required) to partners who are providing transportation services for newly released individuals
64. Provide transportation to prisons for family visits (Please contact individual correctional facilities to determine their requirements and policies)
65. Organize a transportation pool to pickup newly released individuals on the day of release and transport them to their permanent or transitional home. (Please coordinate your activities with the correctional facility.)

Spiritual Focus

66. Actively invite previously incarcerated citizens to attend your worship services
67. Develop and distribute pamphlets and handouts describing your churches services to inmates at nearby correctional facilities, individuals at transitional facilities, and newly released individuals

68. Conduct worship services at nearby correctional or transitional facilities. (Please request approval through correctional and transitional facility channels.)
69. Conduct spiritual and self-development workshops for inmates at nearby correctional facilities and individuals at transitional facilities in your area. (Please request approval through correctional and transitional facility channels.)
70. Distribute materials to your congregation which describe success stories of previously incarcerated citizens through the help of faith-based organizations
71. Write letters of encouragement to inmates. (Please follow individual facility guidelines.)
72. Share success stories of previously incarcerated citizens with other prison and reentry ministries. (Please get permission from individuals before publishing their success stories.)
73. Provide free DVDs of your worship services or special events for inmates at correctional facilities or individuals at transitional facilities or newly released individuals. (Please follow correctional facility guidelines.)
74. Provide music CDs of your worship services or special events for inmates at correctional facilities, individuals at transitional facilities and newly released individuals. (Please follow correctional facility guidelines)
75. Develop and deliver sermons on supporting prison and reentry ministries, reentry efforts and community response to meeting the needs of our newly released individuals and other disadvantaged citizens
76. Conduct quarterly mailings to the community you serve describing your church's services, prison and reentry ministries and specific success stories; highlight your service to disadvantaged citizens
77. Provide support packets (gift certificates, self-development books, CDs, DVDs of special events, etc.) for new released individuals who attend your worship service
78. Conduct permission-based visitation to families of newly released individuals with the goal of determining their needs and your ability to help
79. Conduct annual celebrations of ex-offender reentry successes and other successes of disadvantaged citizens
80. Actively participate in Alabama CPR Network local, regional and state events and activities